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By-Renaud, Andre

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A current experiment in curriculum development for Indian children in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan examines educational objectives in terms of the characteristics of 20th-Century society. Dissimilarities of Indian communities and the cultural background of Indian children in relation to the traits of non-Indian society point out the problem of bridging the gap between them. The main understandings and working principles of the experiment are: (1) anthropological description of the total educational process and definition of the objectives; (2) insertion of Indian cultural traits into everyday curriculum and special attention to specific gaps in the home background; (3) reinterpretation, extension, and expansion of the Indian child's experience; (4) functional learning of skills, such as the English language; and (5) selection of content to foster community educational growth. (SW)

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# EDUCATION FROM WITHIN

## An Experiment in Curriculum Development With Children of Indian Background in Saskatchewan

- Professor André Renaud, O.M.I.

## INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of responsible citizens in Canada are concerning themselves with the education of Indian children. For the purposes of this presentation, they can be divided into three groups. First, there are the Indians themselves, young and less young, leaders and parents, who feel the momentum of the past, are aware of the hardships of the present and hope that the coming years will remove the latter while preserving the best of the former.

Second, there are public officials, community workers, industrialists, etc., recently involved or interested in Indian work. They are rather unaware of the past, but are greatly disturbed by the present. They are anxious to see the Indians share in the blessings of the affluent society. They are impatient to see immediate changes, they press for all-out integration in school and elsewhere, more or less consciously in the light of the experience of immigrants from outside Canada. Third and last, we find seasoned officials and teachers of Indian Affairs Branch, social scientists and long standing members of the Indian-Eskimo Association who are aware of both the past and the present and agree on a middle of the road solution described as community development.

My task today is to describe the experiment now going on in curriculum development with Indian children in Saskatchewan in such a way as to meet the respective preoccupations of these three groups, presumably represented here, namely: cultural perseverance, Canadianization, and educational development of communities.

## PART ONE - ANTHROPOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT WITH CHILDREN OF INDIAN BACKGROUND.

The experiment now going on at the University of Saskatchewan and in the Indian or Northern schools of the Province is based on a very clear-cut understanding and definition of Curriculum Development, as it applies to the particular situation of Indian people in our country. This situation is interpreted in sociological terms which give direction to the experiment and consequently must be explained here briefly before describing the experiment.

### 1. What is Curriculum?

Curriculum means primarily the on-going sequence of learning activities and experiences taking place in a given classroom - whether at the elementary level or in the university, with children or adults - leading pupils or students from point A to B, that is, from the known to the unknown. Therefore, curriculum implies first a group of pupils or students who already know or possess something, namely ideas, beliefs, memories, images, feelings, attitudes, skills, etc., and are helped to acquire new ideas, beliefs, memories, images, feelings, attitudes, skills, etc.

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The former are called the data and the latter are better known as the objectives. These objectives can be classified as "long-range", namely those of a whole schooling period; "intermediate", namely those of a particular year; and "short-range", that is, those of a particular unit which is part of a year's plan.

Because it takes place in an institutional set-up called a classroom, the curriculum also implies a teacher who is normally trained to know: (1) the psychology of his pupils together with the data which they bring to the classroom and their rate of growth; (2) the objectives themselves in terms of skills, understandings, etc.; (3) the methods, procedures, resources, measuring instruments, etc., that can be used to lead the pupils toward the objectives effectively. The teacher is responsible for engineering the sequence of learning activities that will lead to the acquisition of the objectives; consequently, he is the one who truly develops the curriculum.

In most institutions and particularly in provincial departments of education, teachers and instructors are provided with a curriculum guide defining the objectives and suggesting various activities, resources, procedures, etc., that have proved or should prove successful with the majority of pupils serviced by the institution or the department. This assumption can be based on general practice; it should be increasingly tested through scientifically measured experimentation.

Let us note, in passing, that too often it is the curriculum guide itself which is understood by many as meaning the curriculum proper since it is followed so literally by numberous teachers. When this is the case, the guide becomes almost a sacred thing, a bible from which everyone is afraid to deviate. The important elements in any curriculum are the objectives. They justify the existence of the institution, the training of the teacher and the enforcement of school legislation for the pupils. These objectives must be very clear in the minds of the teachers if the pupils are going to attain them. This is where sociology and anthropology come in, as far as the teacher-orientation project at the University of Saskatchewan is concerned. Fundamental concepts from these two disciplines are used to impart to teachers a clear understanding of what they are engaged to do. It is, therefore, worthwhile to pause a moment to look at these objectives described in anthropological terms. This will lead us on to define the other words of our title and experiment, namely children of Indian background.

## 2. What Are the Minimum Objectives of Curriculum Development in Canada?

In all societies, the objectives of the educational process are the same: to equip the next generation with the ideas, beliefs, images, feelings, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviour patterns which will make the children competent members of that society, economically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. The kind of competence, however, depends on the kind of society, since each society has its own ideas, beliefs, images, etc., which make it a particular society and constitute basically its culture. In many societies, including our own, the educational process includes a schooling or formal instruction period which inevitably takes a different form according to each society.

Indians in North America as well as all native peoples elsewhere before the era of imperialism had their own educational process just as they had their own kind of societies and cultures produced by thousands of years of human community living in their respective environments. They had to modify a good deal of these cultures as well as their educational processes when the Europeans came over and not only

took over the country but changed the original environment altogether. Today, children of Indian descent are being schooled presumably for competence in our society rather than for what is left of their own, and therein lies the difficulty. As much as possible, because of this over-all objective, Indian children for the last 25 years have been offered an identical schooling process to the one offered to other children in the country. A cursory look at the results described in the statistics not only of school promotion but of human experience on the reserves is enough to conclude that this approach has so far produced rather poor results. These poor results are exactly what has prompted the Department of Education of Saskatchewan to ask the University to study the situation and, if possible, improve it by helping teachers to do a better job. It is in developing a curriculum with these teachers that the following understandings have been achieved and the objectives of Indian schooling redefined in the following way.

If education or rather the schooling of children of Indian background is to bring about "integration" in our society, it is necessary to look at the main traits or features of our society since these truly constitute the objectives of the educational process itself. Then we can take a look at Indian communities, in relation to these objectives or traits. This very comparison between the two types of societies is crucial in the orientation of teachers. It must be done in such a way as to eliminate any feeling of superiority on the part of the teacher from our society dealing with children from another society. Otherwise, the teacher will understand his job as one of remaking his pupils to our image. Furthermore, if "integration" is the goal, that is, if the Indian is going to recognize us as his fellow human being and if we are to recognize him as such at the end of the process, we must postulate from the very beginning that he is already a member of the human race. In other words, we must not compare the two societies as one being "Indian" and the other one "Canadian", but as two human societies or types of human societies or, if you wish, as two experiments of the same human race to community living in a common country; one having started thousands of years ago and moving in from the western side of the continent, and the other, far more recent, having started from the east and bringing to our continent the human achievements from another continent called Europe. It is much easier to appreciate the achievements of people of Indian tradition in this light, remembering their protracted isolation from the various centres of cultural development in the rest of the world, and to understand their present predicament in trying to integrate within their original culture the achievements of thousands of years of experimentation elsewhere. Furthermore, in accepting the experience of the Indians as a valid human one preceding our own in the same environment, it is easier to reach the conclusion that now, since we are together again after having been separated for thousands of years, we must exchange our respective experience rather than eliminate one, namely theirs and rubber-stamp our own instead.

In this light, it becomes also evident that our own society is not primarily a Canadian one but rather part of a developing world society and civilization. On the other hand, however, the Indian human experience is much more Canadian in terms of adjustment to the Canadian environment. At the same time, today's Indian cultures are in a similar relation to the world civilization, which we share with an increasing number of people of various countries and races, as other societies now trying to catch-up with this universal 20th-Century civilization.

A society is essentially a group of people living together and consequently, communicating with each other in different ways. Ours is a "talking society". By the very necessity of large numbers living in one place and coming together from various places, backgrounds, and cultures, we have to talk to one another, to ask each other questions so as to team up quickly and efficiently for the job at hand. We extend and expand our talking via time and space through technological advances such as the telephone and the radio, the tape-recorder, etc. We use language not only to produce the goods that make up the affluent society, but also to relate inter-personally: we talk all the time, because we come from various places, live in separate houses, sleep in separate bedrooms and, perhaps, because we do not want to know each other too well.

Second, we are a "literate society", that is, a reading and writing society where oral communication is transferred to relative permanency for extended use in time and space. This literacy tradition goes back some five thousand years and is well integrated in our total way of life, even though some of our forefathers came personally into it only a few generations ago. It is so much part of our living experience that we are usually unaware to what extent this single factor has been the key to all the scientific and technological advancement of which we are so proud. Incidentally, none of our respective forefathers were responsible for its discovery.

Third, our society is "scientific". The knowledge on which it functions is constantly tested in various kinds of laboratories or in ordinary life situations. In both instances, it is recorded, measured, compared, analyzed, and deducted. The world of our beliefs is shrinking constantly, replaced by hypotheses that have been tested and confirmed and which we call science.

Fourth, our society is increasingly "urban", socially distributed on a horizontal level, even though physically vertical more and more. This means that each generation learns more from itself rather than from the preceding one and that each family is made up almost exclusively of husband and wife and children. Young people learn how to become husbands and wives and parents, not from their own parents or grandparents or uncles or older brothers and sisters, but from each other and from institutions such as the hospitals, the libraries, organizations, Doctor Kinsey, Doctor Spock, etc.

Fifth, our society is "multi-cultural and multi-ethnic". In one way, it tolerates a much broader range of cultural perseverance and expression than more homogeneous societies. At the same time, it minimizes cultural differences to the point of alienating the individual not only from his own group but even from himself. As a result, our composite identity is much more confused and diffused than it has been at earlier times or in other societies.

Sixth, our society is "industrialized" for the production of food or other goods. Twentieth-century man, Canadian version, manipulates, destroys, and reconstructs his environment constantly, thus increasing the separation from nature and minimizing the restrictions and particularities of environmental forces. Just remember, for instance, that even though our climate ranges from 40° below to 95° above in any place, we spend most of our days in a comfortable 70°.

Seventh, our society is "commercialized". The goods that are produced are purchased through the use of money and so are the various services which in earlier times were given or secured freely. We buy the water we drink. We pay our teenagers to sit by our babies. This implies that each one of us must have "marketable skill" of some sort in order to get the almighty dollar necessary to procure goods and services. In terms of economics, our society is centred on private property and the accumulation of capital, recently mitigated by various forms of social welfare. A very large number of our social traits, the bulk of our civil laws, and innumerable behaviour patterns originate from this cultural preference for private property.

Eighth, because it is urban, multi-ethnic and industrialized, our society is "complex". It is made up of innumerable groups and sub-groups that concentrate and segregate us in different ways at different times for different purposes. It is in these groups that each one of us finds some kind of status and prestige and a sense of belonging. Since they are so numerous and each one of us moves so much from group to group and place to place, a common pattern of parliamentary procedure is emerging which can be considered one of the minimum essentials of our educational process.

Ninth, our society is built on an ever expanding, though impersonal, amount of "inter-dependence" between its members and their innumerable organizations as well as with other societies around the world. We rely on various individuals, companies, governments, and countries to provide us with the food, new resources, products, and services which we now consider essential to our "talking" trait and obsession, is made up of components that originally come from some eighty countries. A revolution or an earthquake, no matter how distant, is enough to create a major problem right across our social organization from the House of Commons to the price of coffee in the humblest home.

Tenth and last, all these traits are being developed in a part of the world called and recognized by every other country as "Canada". The Canadian dimension of our society is not yet as clearly defined as the other traits, since we need Royal Commissions to do so. We accept grudgingly the presence of two languages and two cultures; we have been reasonably successful at adjusting technologically to extremes in distances and temperatures that are the basic geographical data of our immense national territory, but are not psychologically reconciled to either of them. Witness our flight to the south whenever we can afford it and our unconscious assumption that all Canadians should resemble us in every way.

These are the ten essential traits of our contemporary Canadian society. These, therefore, constitute the "objectives" of the total educational process taking place within our national territory, to be attained by the majority of individual little humans born in homes and communities integrated in the larger society. Our children are persuaded, directed, and lured towards these objectives by and through almost every contact with individuals, groups, and institutions that make up our society. The school is but one agency in the whole process and its work is constantly reinforced by everyone and everything around it, provided, of course, that the house and the community from whence come its pupils are themselves integrated in the larger society. The minimum acquisition of these traits is or should be accomplished by the age of 16, roughly the end of Grade IX. Further specialization and acquisition of marketable skills is increasingly postponed till that level has been reached. In our experiment, therefore, we assume that the total educational process must bring all children to this level, otherwise it is inefficient and its products will not have the minimum social, economic, emotional,

and spiritual competence necessary to function in our society; they will be a burden to themselves and to the whole society, one way or another.

### 3. The Indian Child's Background

Having defined our society in the above terms and recognized its traits as the minimum objectives of the primary schooling process, let us now take a look at Indian communities and at the cultural background of Indian children. After all, contrary to what some administrators and ordinary citizens might think, Indian children are not born in a vacuum, but into families that are integrated in a given type of human community, which may or may not be integrated in the larger society which we call Canadian. Perhaps, in doing so, we will describe Indian communities in terms of the past, as far as some Indian communities in this part of Canada are concerned. However, even so, because of the weight of human tradition within any given people, many of you will recognize the following fundamental traits as being in existence today in most places.

Trait number one - today's Indian communities are a continuation of a "silent" type of human society. In a hunting and fishing economy, with non-sophisticated weapons such as the club, the stone-knives and the bow and arrow, silence was gold and the talkative individual had few chances of being popular with the group or successful with the game. Indian communities developed ways of communicating between human beings which did not stress oral language. These forms of non-oral communications are still with them. Nor, by the way, are they exclusive of Indian societies. (In our own society, anthropologists are observing certain forms of silent communication that are pretty effective, such as the way a worker deposits or drops his hammer at the end of the day, the way a visitor in your office pushes back his chair or closes your door, etc., etc.) Most of our Indian tribes or societies and cultures belonged to the non-oral or silent communication system. Not that they did not appreciate oral language, but they did not use it for all purposes like we do particularly now, restricting it mostly to diplomacy and recreation. The present Conference has been a pretty convincing demonstration of how efficient they still are in both these functions. The fact remains, however, that in a face-to-face and hunting society, talking is not necessary to be successful at the hunt or to nurture social awareness; on the contrary, silence replaces the walls and hedges that have been acknowledged as essential to English society. Indians have consequently developed other patterns of communication much more than we have. They read or guess each other and other fellow human beings much better than we of the talking society are able to do.

Trait number two - Indian communities function without the benefit of full literacy. Even though in an increasing number of them, the majority of individuals can read and write, literacy as such is not as functionally and universally operative as in our society. The presence of literacy as a skill is not enough to make a community literate. It must be applied to the various functions of living together over a long period of time so as to become as functional as oral language skills. With Indians, for instance, the record of the past is still transmitted orally by the older generation and not in textbooks, as in our society. Communication between bands is still very small and the use of the printed word in the form of newsletter to communicate their diversified experiences to one another across Canada is just beginning with the emergence of Friendship Centres. In the meanwhile, most Indian societies, at least in Northern Canada and on the Prairies operate with a minimum of recorded language. This means that the child growing up in these communities does not imbibe literacy as much as those growing up in other Canadian communities. The technique of reading itself is not used to the same

extent. There are few books and newspapers in the homes or on the reserve, nor are there many Indians availing themselves of public libraries. Yet most Indians are potentially avid readers, provided the printed material is of direct interest to them. Hence, the need to encourage and facilitate more publications about and by Indians.

Trait number three - Indian communities or societies are still functioning in a pre-scientific and empirical way. This does not imply that their knowledge, traditional and current, is not accurate. On the contrary, anthropologists and historians have definite proof that the factual knowledge of the geography, wild life, and vegetation of various areas in Canada accumulated by the Indians was extremely extensive and accurate, in fact, far more so than that of the majority of individual Canadians today, outside of a few botanists or officers of the Wild Life Service of the Department of Forestry. This knowledge, however, was purely empirical. It was the accumulated observation of centuries of hunting and food gathering. It had been tested thoroughly, but only in relation to satisfaction of basic human needs such as food, shelter, and clothing, and not in order to discover the basic laws of life itself as in contemporary science. It had been recorded not in writing, but in the memory of the group and was handed down by word of mouth. Each individual confirmed it and added to it by direct and personal observation. This traditional knowledge of natural environment has been changed and such knowledge has lost its life-giving function and purpose. The process itself has remained, however, applied to the man-made environment of our cities and other institutions: parents and neighbors tell children what they know of the whiteman's society and where to get supplies of one kind or another, etc. Both grown-ups and children keep their eyes open all the time to learn more, but it is not recorded and tested observation. It is often accurate, but it is not scientific.

Trait number four - Indian communities, particularly on reserves, are traditional. The older people still teach the young directly and personally. The child-rearing patterns developed by each community or tribe over the centuries are still carried out, even though the equipment used is increasingly factory-made. These patterns are learned by each teenage girl either by watching and helping her mother bring up the younger ones or by helping an older sister or other relatives. Needless to say, the young Indian mothers are far more confident and secure in looking after their children than new mothers in our society. New patterns of child-rearing and home-making, more in line with those found in our society, are taught to only a small minority of girls, who reach the high school level. Even then, it is so theoretical that it usually has little bearing on the practices eventually carried out in the home by these girls. As a result, the little human beings born to them and to the other less-educated girls are brought up as though the industrial revolution had never taken place.

Trait number five - because of the original geographical isolation, socially reinforced by the reserve system, Indian communities are homogeneous. Cross fertilization of ideas, skills, and attitudes is still kept to a minimum and in-breeding is constant. The main consequence is that each Indian community, except for fringe bands here and there at the margin of our cities and towns, has a very definite identity well known to its members. To those of us who belong to the large complex multi-lateral and alienating society, this in itself creates a major stumbling block. We don't know who we are and we don't know how it feels to have a strong group identity. Because so many of us have surrendered even our ethnic identity in favour of the melting pot, though perhaps not to the same extent

as south of our border, we find it difficult to understand how this identity operates within the mind and heart of an individual. Indians know much better who they are, at least in their own eyes and minds. Perhaps there is some truth to what some Indians in this part of the country are saying when they state that their own cultural situation is similar to that of French Canadians in Quebec.

Trait number six - Indian societies and communities, at least in the northern areas of the various provinces, are still not part of the industrialized society. Their production of goods, food, and services is still very limited and restricted to their own needs. Most of them still conceive of food-gathering of one kind or another, including relief, as the best way to satisfy these needs. In terms of the relationship between man and his environment, they still accept the latter as the constant to which the former must adjust rather than vice-versa as in an industrial society such as ours. It is the case of maximum human adjustment with minimum manipulation of environment versus minimum human adjustment and maximum manipulation of environment.

Trait number seven - partly because of food-gathering processes still in existence, a very large number of Indian societies do not fully operate on the dollar system. They do not buy water, pay rent, buy fuel, etc. Most government services come to them without a price. Furthermore, the sharing pattern is still present in many communities, preventing the accumulation of goods and the full experience of private property with all its psychological and social consequences.

Trait number eight - most Indian communities number less than a thousand members. Consequently, they are still simple and un-diversified. Even the administrative set-up is simple since most services are provided by the one agency, namely Indian Affairs Branch. The last fifty years have seen serious efforts on the part of government to develop sub-groups and introduce parliamentary procedures through band councils, home-makers clubs, etc. On the whole, however, there are still few formal organizations in Indian communities and most social planning is either informal, traditional, or non-existent.

Trait number nine - separateness - individuals in each Indian community are aware of an extensive amount of inter-dependences with their fellowmen inside the group. However, because of constant administrative, socio-psychological, and often geographic separation, each Indian community conceives of itself as a "WE" and looks at the outside world as "THEY". Innumerable contributions from this outside to the welfare and total being of individuals and of the group go unnoticed and, in reverse, the numerous contributions by Indian individuals and groups are also unnoticed. In other words, among Indian people there is little psychological awareness or recognition that they need other human beings outside the reserves and that other human beings need them. Needless to say, this is a very poor basis for integration of any kind.

Trait number ten - Indian communities are well aware that in some way they are far more Canadian than all the other communities that have emerged on our common territory. They still resent the fact that their "affairs" are administered by a department that looks primarily after immigrants and issues citizenship documents to newcomers. In their collective memory and consciousness, there is absolutely no ancestral tie with any other country but Canada.

This sums up very sketchily the sociological traits noticeable in most Indian communities, at least in Saskatchewan. Of course, there are great variations in the range of each trait or the criss-cross patterns, according to the origin and location of the band, relationship with other people in the area and particularly the sequence of non-Indians who have exercised one function or another in it: government officials, teachers, missionaries, traders, medical personnel, etc. In terms of curriculum development, these traits and what they imply and a host of other things which we have no time to mention or describe, constitute the data that the child of Indian background brings to school because he has grown up in such communities. They also constitute the frame of reference in the mind and the heart of the child during all his schooling years. When compared with the traits of our society, as part of the Twentieth Century, industrial civilization and as constituting the objectives of the educational process, the problem of bridging the gap between the two locms in a much more accurate perspective.

## PART TWO - GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPING CURRICULUM WITH CHILDREN OF INDIAN BACKGROUND.

The theory of curriculum development which we use in Saskatchewan and which we apply in the orientation of teachers accepts this data as the foundation on which the schooling process must be built. No matter which way we look at it, it cannot be and it must not be ignored. On the contrary, teachers should be as familiar with this foundation as possible; otherwise, they will build the house next to the foundation instead of on it. We suspect that this is what has happened too often, producing semi-educated Indians, either without a house in an uncovered basement or in a house without a basement.

A second assumption is that the socio-psychological growth of the Indian child must be as continual a process as it is with other children; he has a right to it. He is the one who does the learning and must reach the objectives. A third assumption is that in ordinary circumstances, barring physical or physiological defects or hereditary misgivings, the Indian child brings as much intelligence to school as any other child. In fact, we suspect that his curiosity is perhaps greater than that of many urban children since he experienced a very unrestricted type of discipline in infancy and early childhood, free to explore every spot and corner of the reserve. This developed curiosity is part of his potential which can be and should be channelled in order to secure the objectives as firmly as possible. We suspect that too often, because the community background of the child is constantly ignored, the curiosity the child brings to school is left unsatisfied, and eventually peters out before the objectives are reached. Too often indeed, what is being taught is not related formally to what the child knows from his home and community. As a result, his mind and his heart go back home to the reserve; even though he is still physically present in the classroom, he has lost interest - school does not turn out to be the place to learn, as it was claimed to be.

There must be a way to guide this child surely and gently towards the objectives that are now accepted in contemporary industrialized society on a world-wide basis. His curiosity cannot only be channelled, but expanded, gathering enough momentum to see him beyond the minimum objectives and the Grade X level, so as to proceed to further training and the life-long pursuit of knowledge.

We are sincerely convinced that the curriculum to be developed with Indian children coming from such communities cannot be identical to the one suggested and implemented with children from urban centres, whose home and community provide a different data and frame of reference. The standard curriculum guides have been organized for the children of the latter group. It is childish to assume that, on the one hand, following these guides literally will bring all Indian children to the objectives and, on the other hand, that deviating from it will prevent these children from reaching the objectives. Human learning in our world-wide civilization can be compared to a pyramid. The children in each society start from a different spot, the higher they go, the closer they come to other children from other societies, so that at the university level students from various countries can be interchanged. The main thing is to go up, to climb rather than fall off.

In practice, what can be done to tie up the ideas and skills that the standard curriculum has for objectives to the cultural background and growing process of Indian children?

The simplest guiding rule is called the "theory of pegs and gaps". If, for one reason or another, (for instance, the presence of children from urban background in the classroom, or if the teacher does not feel confident and competent enough to develop his own curriculum initially in direction to the objectives) the standard curriculum guide is followed, as many units or lessons as possible in it must be scrutinized beforehand with what we call "bi-focal glasses" so as to find the pegs and the gaps that relate to the local Indian tradition. By this we mean that the objectives and content of each unit must be assessed against the on-going life on the reserve in order to identify, on the one hand, an Indian fact - past or present, that can be used as a peg or an illustration and, on the other, the specific gap which needs reinforcement beyond what the regular school program provides for children growing up in an urbanized environment. It is a very simple guiding principle. If we study housing or food or government, for instance, why do we constantly illustrate our lessons exclusively with materials from our own society or from that of our forefathers or the Greeks or the Romans? Somewhere in the wealth of information already available on the various Indian societies of North America, there is an illustration for almost every single item to be taught. If each week, if not each day, the Indian child is offered this peg, he will see that all along his forefathers were part of the society of man, separated from other societies only by geographical distances. Little by little, in an objective way, he will satisfy his curiosity about his own past and so will other children present in the classroom. As for the gaps, they are pretty glaring to anyone who takes a second look at the Indian communities. They have to be filled very gently, particularly at the beginning, when the child is still very self-conscious. If it means drill or an extra film or trip or visit for the whole class or at least for the Indian children, it can and must be done so as to provide for the lack of experience. Any teacher with a minimum of imagination will find ways and means to do so constantly, if he is really interested in the growth of the children. Later on, of course, as the Indian child grows older and becomes more objective about his people and his past, a more direct confrontation between corresponding items from the two societies can be made and the child allowed freedom to choose what he prefers.

The second working principle is more directly in terms of actual curriculum development. It consists in taking the data that the child brings to school: ideas, images, beliefs, attitudes, etc., and (1) re-interpreting it in terms of the literate, scientific, industrial, and urbanized society, (2) extending it beyond the limits of the reserve or of the child's experience to the dimensions of the province, the country, the world, and (3) expanding and enriching it to reach as many zones of contemporary human activity as possible. This can be done methodically in practically all areas of the curriculum. So far, however, we have done it mostly in social studies. In training teachers to apply this theory, we have developed a curriculum guide for the first three years of the elementary school. (It is now an official appendix in the revised edition of the Curriculum Guide of the Department of Education of Saskatchewan.) In it we have redefined the objectives of the official program in terms of cultural traits as described above, singled out those that need greater attention initially because of remoteness from the living experience of the majority of the children, and reorganized the content accordingly. We have taken the Indian community as focus and starting point for each year, but a community increasingly redefined in a more scientific, more literate, and so on way. From the community, we suggest a sequence of units to extend and expand the experience of the child in the direction of the objectives.

One illustration will help you to understand this approach: the concept of home. In our urban society, home is identified with the house or apartment in which I, the child, live with Mom and Dad, maybe one brother and sister. This is the place where I eat, sleep, live in general, outside of a few hours allowed on the pavement or in the backyard or perhaps in a nearby park. If I do not show myself at mealtime or a bedtime, my parents are upset and even the police department will be set into action. In this home lives one adult man, my father, and one adult woman, my mother, with whom I am in constant association. Contact with other adults is limited to the few service people, relatives and friends approved by my parents and for very short periods. My father leaves every morning at breakfast time and goes to a place that I am told is "work", and he comes back at 5 o'clock for five days in the week and roughly fifty weeks in the year. I grow up with this idea and everything it implies. As for my mother, she arranges and models my life in every way. If you look at our readers, at our arithmetic programs, and so on, everything is described in relation to this kind of "home". Home to the Indian child is not the house where Mom and Dad live. Somethimes they don't live there and together. The child does not sleep in that house overy evening nor eat there all the time. If he is not there at meal or bedtime, his parents are not worried because he has relatives and friends all around and nobody is going to leave him without food or shelter. Consequently, the home of this child is more or less the total community, or at least the neighborhood, and he is in personal contact with numerous adults. These relationships with a larger field of experience constitute the data that the school program must reinterpret in terms of the scientific and urban society. When this is done, the Indian child can see his home in a different light and is able to compare it with other homes, that are far more restricted, more technical, and so on, without losing pride or identification.

The concept of play and toys is another instance. In our society, affluent and capitalistic, each child is burdened with endless numbers of factory-made toys that clutter his already restricted field of experience: his playpen, the playroom, or the backyard. Their main purpose is to develop the sense of private property. Needless to say, in many instances the toy stultifies his imagination, hence, he loses interest in most of them in a short time, except for those through which he

can recreate the adult experiences with which he is most familiar: trucks, pots, and pans. The regular program of the Province in Grade I has a unit on toys, since they are so important in the everyday life of our children. The first objective of this unit, as it reads in the official guide, aims at parting the child a little from his toys in order to give him the idea that "sharing his toys can be a source of joy and happiness". An Indian child has very few factory-made toys and if he has, they do not last very long. He picks up a stick or stone, or a rubber band, or a loose wheel or tire, and he makes his toys. When he is through with it, he leaves the "toy" there and another child can do the same another time. As outlined in the regular curriculum guide, the standard unit is meaningless to this kind of child. What he needs is not to learn how to share, but the opposite, namely the experience of private ownership and the respect for the private property of others. Only in this way will his experience be reinterpreted and supplemented in relation to the larger society.

As far as developing an awareness of inter-dependence is concerned, the teacher cannot usually single out the work of each father of each child in the classroom. Sometimes the father is not even mentioned publicly. What can be done is to assume the work of the adults on the reserve in general, to see it converted into dollars and cents that buy food and candy, to follow its product, e.g. fur, transported outside the area eventually reaching Toronto or Regina, or any other place that can have significance to the child, and contributing to the happiness of any number of individuals that can be seen on pictures, on movies, or in newspapers, etc. Vice versa the child is familiar with candy and Coca-Cola, etc. Units on transportation, trade, industry, etc. can be engineered beginning with the actual product found on the reserve and working back to the factory, the bank that finances the factory, and so on and so forth. In this way the concept of work and inter-dependence can be developed and a host of other understandings achieved. This to us is genuine curriculum development with children of Indian background and, as far as we are able to establish, it works. The teachers who have been courageous enough to try it are excited, so are the pupils and their parents. For them all, the school is taking a new look as the place where one can satisfy his curiosity and learn new things about one's self and others.

A third guiding rule with which we are experimenting, and not without success, is that of "<u>functional learning</u>". The basic skills that are part and parcel of Twentieth Century's civilization are primarily functional skills and are best learned in living situations. This is particularly true for individuals and communities where these skills are not yet functionally operating. Reading, for instance, in our own society is extremely functional and children from urban areas grow up with an awareness of this fact. It is, therefore, possible to teach them reading in a semi-recreational way and to stress literary aspects, since the techniques will be applied at home and elsewhere constantly for more functional purposes. This is not the case with the Indian child whose parents still communicate to a large degree by word of mouth or visual observation. Literacy has, therefore, to be applied to the on-going life experience of the child constantly, not only in the school but outside the school and in various situations. Similarly, because children in the majority society grow up with English as their mother-tongue and are exposed to every functional type of English used in our society, the school can concentrate on a more literary approach to the language. This is not the case in Indian societies and of the Indian child for whom English is a second language. He must learn to "live in English" outside and beyond the classroom. The functional approach to oral English teaching with Indian children is to give priority to vocabulary

and patterns specifically designed to improve his and his parents' use of English in on-going activities of contact with the larger society. Once an Indian child can function as practical interpreter to his parents in the post office, the bank, the store, the hospital, at the movies, etc., the school and all that it stands for acquire a much more personal significance in the minds and hearts of parents and children. Instead of being, as it is too often yet, a divisive influence between children and parents, it reinforces the family-ties so important in times of rapid social change.

The various other areas of the curriculum can be explored in the same way. Take science, for instance. Indians have been observing facts of animal and vegetable nature for centuries, in order to survive. The next step towards acquiring a scientific outlook is to record successive observations and to see if the facts repeat themselves and then to experiment with them in order to test an explanation. Observations and experiments thus recorded can later be compared with observations and experiments carried out elsewhere and reported for scientific works. Thus, using a natural interest and a tradition present in the community, the child can be truly initiated to scientific thinking and literature. Arithmetic is taught to develop quantitative thinking which is a must in our society. This was not the case in a hunting society, operating at a subsistence level. The Indian child has to learn to think in terms of quantities, prices, and salaries, and so on. However, the problems that are offered him in regular textbooks are directly in line with the affluent society. He is asked how many tin cans of food he can buy for his pet cat or dog if he earns so much money as a baby-sitter, for instance. The irrelevance of this type of content for the Indian child is glaring. In his world all animals are worth only the food or clothing they provide (except the dog for transportation) and food is barely available to people, let alone to animals. A more functional approach is to use the facts from the trapline or whatever activities the adults on the reserve are engaged in, translate them in terms of dollars in order to buy services or goods that the Indian child finds familiar. And so on and so forth in almost every field, if learning is to lead to adjusted behavior.

The fourth and last guiding principle in our working by patterns is what we call <u>selection of content for community educational development</u>. The adult Indian population of the reserves has very specific problems to tackle. Yet, because of lack of a complete and well-integrated education, the grown-ups have very little up-to-date scientific information concerning the choices to be made in various situations. They have to go by what government officials, missionaries, or traders tell them. Hence, they often don't decide because they don't feel <u>they</u> are making the choices.

We think that in selecting content to train children in the skills necessary for the industrial era, preference should be given to facts and information that could be of almost immediate use to the grown-ups on the reserve in relation to their current preoccupations. It may be a fish-filleting plant and log-cutting contract, a fur-block system, etc., etc. By selecting as focus of interest once in a while the on-going problems of the adults, the school identifies itself more closely with the local community. Some of the information collected and used in the classroom for the purposes of the curriculum is bound to spread on the reserve and give the school a new image. The assumption is that not only will this contribute to change the attitude of the parents concerning their children's attendance to school, but that it will eventually interest them to come to the school in order

to pick up some of this information for themselves. Once this pattern is established, the cultural isolation under which the Indian communities have been labouring for so long may come to an end. We too often forget that these communities, as human communities rather than residential centres, are not yet fully opened to the broad channels of communication and information that enrich our collective and personal life, almost drowning us with the output of all the research centres of the world and the problems and decisions of every country, every province, every profession, etc., etc. The Indians have yet no psychological link with these channels and the local school is the only learning agency that can operate the connection.

Anthropological description of the total educational process and definition of the objectives, insertion of Indian cultural pegs and special attention to specific cultural gaps in the home background, reinterpretation, extension and expansion of the child's experience, functional learning of skills and selection of content to foster community educational growth - these are the main understandings and working principles of the experiment we are carrying out in Saskatchewan. They have been established and confirmed in the very process of developing a curriculum for the teachers themselves participating in our training sessions. After all, teachers are learners too and teachers working with pupils of Indian background are professionally just as culturally isolated, scientifically un-informed and technically mal-equipped as the Indians themselves, in general. Hence, they too have to apply to themselves the methods of cultural change. This experience makes it easier for them to understand what the Indians have to go through. Those who have undergone the training so far have understood, among other things, the need to break this professional and illiterate isolation; last summer they founded the "Society for Indian and Northern Education". The main purpose of the Society is to publish a journal so as to keep each other informed of experimentation here and there in Canada and elsewhere in the world where similar cultural changes are being guided and facilitated by teachers. The first issue has appeared already with "The Northian" as title, published through the generous support of The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, which has accepted the Society as an affiliate.

Resources, financial and otherwise, are still lacking to evaluate our experiment in a truly scientific way. We would like to know exactly the impact of this anthropological approach not only on the pupils, but also on the communities and on the teachers themselves. So far, empirical observation, feed-back from the teachers and reports from superintendents are mostly encouraging. We do not have all the answers, but we think we are on the right track to find some. Thank you.

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